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TAGS: PGOV PREL MARR MASS PBTS AJ

SUBJECT: AZERBAIJAN'S DEPUTY FOREIGN MINISTER ON NATIONAL SECURITY CONCEPT AND BUREACRATIC JOCKEYING

REF: BAKU 01753

Classified By: DCM Jason P. Hyland for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (C) Summary: During a January 10 meeting with then-Charge d'Affaires, Deputy Foreign Minister Araz Azimov said Azerbaijan's draft National Security Concept (NSC) will be sent to the Presidential Apparat within the coming weeks. (As requested reftel, we seek the Department's guidance on any comment/response it may have on the draft NSC language.) Azimov noted that he wants the MFA to "quietly" assume a lead role in developing a more regular interagency process to address national security issues and policies. Azimov said President Aliyev is committed to moving the Azerbaijani military into compliance with NATO standards, and there may be a reorganization of the Ministry of Defense in 2007 resulting in a civilian Minister of Defense. End Summary.

Update on the National Security Concept

¶2. (C) Deputy Foreign Minister Araz Azimov told then-Charge d'Affaires on January 10 that he has given the draft National Security Concept (NSC) to "my authorities," and it may be sent to the Presidential Apparat within one week. Charge explained that the USG seeks to provide more direct assistance to the GOAJ as it drafts accompanying documents to the NSC. Azimov noted that the modalities of this closer cooperation could be discussed during his political-military consultations in Washington. (Comment: As requested reftel, we seek the Department's guidance on key language in the draft NSC, particularly regarding the Nagorno Karabakh conflict. A strong USG endorsement of this document, once it becomes public, is necessary to advance our goal of securing progress in Azerbaijan's IPAP implementation. If there are any concerns regarding language in the NSC, we will need to raise them privately with the GOAJ as soon as possible.)

Raising MFA's Role on National Security Issues

¶3. (C) Azimov said the MFA played a key coordinating role in drafting the NSC. Stemming from this role, Azimov said he wants the MFA to play a leadership role on other national security issues and policies. Azimov explained that he envisions the MFA "quietly" taking the lead in developing a more regular interagency process to address national security issues and policy documents. Azimov said that he is developing an analysis center within the MFA that could have several functions, including hosting inter-agency meetings and providing analysis to President Aliyev on key national security issues.

Potential MOD Restructuring

¶4. (C) Commenting on GOAJ bureaucratic wrangling, Azimov singled out the Ministry of Defense as "aggressively non-cooperative." Azimov commented that he is not enthusiastic about the MOD's willingness to move the Military Doctrine in the "right direction." He also observed that there are rumors that 2007 could be "the year of the split" as President Aliyev may restructure the MOD. (Comment: Azimov was a bit unclear on this point, but we judge that he meant the establishment of a civilian Minister of Defense.) Azimov explained that President Aliyev is committed to restructuring the military in line with NATO standards. Azimov noted that President Aliyev can be "very quick" in making such important changes. In response to Charge's question, Azimov dismissed press reports that a retired Turkish general may be appointed as the Azerbaijan's Deputy Defense Minister as part of a reform effort, saying that President Aliyev was sensitive to issues reflecting on Azerbaijan's sovereignty.

Miscellaneous Business

¶5. (C) Before closing the meeting, Charge noted that the USG looks forward to the upcoming Economic Partnership Commission and assigns a high priority to this dialogue. The USG believes this forum is important particularly as the GOAJ faces decisions about how to manage the expected increased revenues from energy income. Charge also noted that the USG was pleased with the recent compromise on Sudan within the UN Human Rights Council (UNHRC) and that the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) had played a helpful role in this process. Charge emphasized that the USG wanted to ensure

that the UNHRC did not have a one-sided, anti-Israel focus.
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